

**CHRISTIANS
GATHER TO
HONOR ICON**

LOCAL, PAGE A4



**KODY WALSH
GETS 110 YEARS
FOR MURDER**

LOCAL, PAGE A4

TODAY WED THU
53°/30° 62°/41° 67°/38°
Complete forecast, A2

IceHogs hope
for playoff spot
SPORTS, PAGE B1

Rockford Register Star

Newspaper of the Rock River Valley

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

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NATION/WORLD

**Another jet-search
unknown: What's
the cost?**

BANGKOK — It's not a question most governments involved in the hunt for the Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 care to answer: How much has the far-flung, month-long search cost? **A3**

**Pistorius takes
witness stand for
first time**

PRETORIA, South Africa — His voice shaking, Oscar Pistorius took the witness stand Monday for the first time, testifying that he was trying to protect the girlfriend he killed and that he became so tormented by memories of the fatal shooting and panic attacks that he once hid helplessly in a closet. **A3**

LOCAL

**Tech company
expands in
Rockford**

T6 Broadband on Monday opened a new regional technology center in Rockford. The company employs about 60 workers for a variety of jobs such as customer service and engineering, and it hopes to eventually employ 100 people here. **A2**

**Officials break
ground on addition**

A new addition to St. James Catholic Church in Belvidere could house up to 900 more people once it's finished this fall. **A6**

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Classified B4-5,8 Local.....A2,4
Comics.....B6 Lottery.....A2
Crossword.....B7 Opinion.....A7
Deaths.....A5-6 U.S./World....A3



ZIOCK BUILDING

Downtown hotel deal OK'd

Council sees project as catalyst for other development

By Kevin Haas
Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — Aldermen approved a deal to redevelop the city's first

skyscraper Monday that Mayor Larry Morrissey said could become one of the council's "signature moments."

City Council members

voted 13-1 to approve an agreement with Wisconsin-based Gorman & Co. to turn the more-than-century-old Ziock building, 416 S. Main St., into a 150-bed hotel

More on A6

Rural on Tap bar approved.

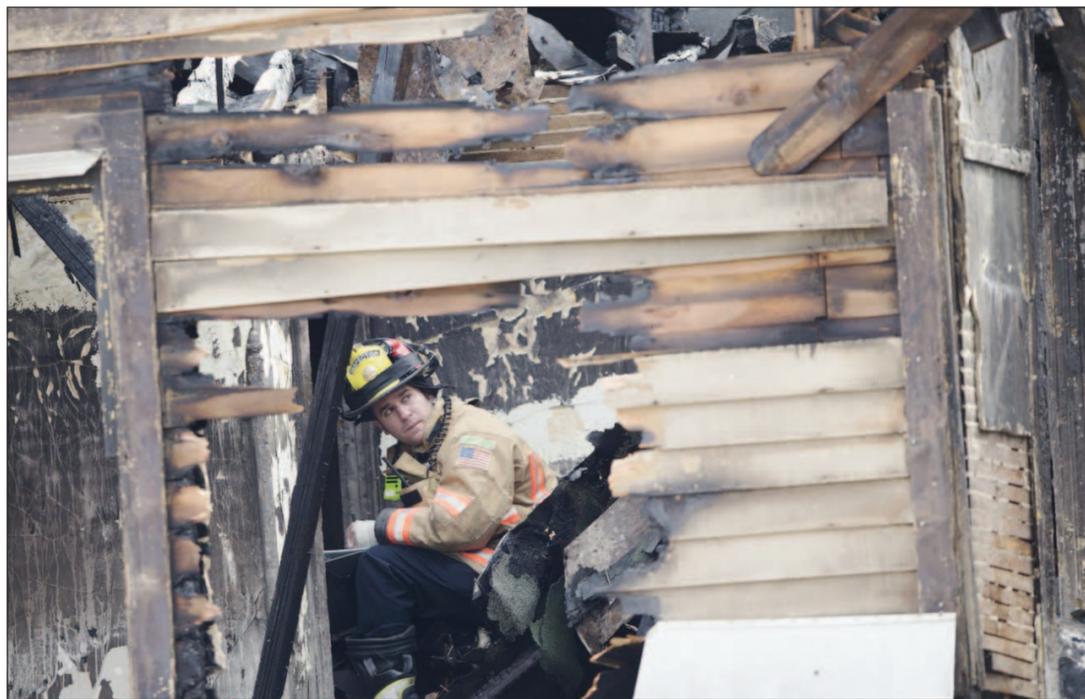
and conference center. Ald. Linda McNeely, who represents the 13th Ward where the hotel would be built,

was the lone "no" vote.

Applause in the council chambers erupted after the final votes were tallied. Supporters of the project — which included building

SEE HOTEL, A6

ABANDONED HOUSE



A Rockford Fire Department inspector looks around the second floor of an abandoned home Monday after an early morning fire killed two at the residence in the 400 block of Knowlton Street in Rockford. MAX GERSH/RRSTAR.COM

2 dead in Rockford fire

By Jeff Kolkey
Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — Two homeless men were killed and one was injured after an abandoned and condemned home in which they were sleeping caught fire at 12:02 a.m. Monday in the 400 block of Knowlton Street.

David R. Caperson, 47, was pronounced dead at

the scene about 1:45 a.m. Timothy W. Porter, 59, was pronounced dead at 1:15 a.m. Autopsies revealed both died from smoke inhalation.

Officials are still attempting to contact Porter's family. Anyone with information on how to reach the family is asked to call the Winnebago County Coroner's Office at 815-319-4970.

Rockford Fire Department Chief Derek Bergsten said the deaths were a tragic example of the dangers surrounding abandoned homes in the city. Damage to the two-story house near King Elementary School was so extensive that it slowed investigators trying to determine the cause of the fire.

"There was no power,

no gas or water," Bergsten said. "The gas and electric were both disconnected and the one occupant who survived said they weren't smoking and didn't have any fires going."

Bergsten said the survivor told fire investigators that his attempts to rouse his friends after being awakened by the

SEE FIRE, A4

CRIMEA FALLOUT

Activists say east Ukraine region now independent

Pro-Russian group takes over building

By Peter Leonard
The Associated Press

DONETSK, Ukraine — Pro-Russian activists barricaded inside a government building in eastern Ukraine proclaimed the region independent Monday and called for a referendum on seceding from Ukraine — an ominous echo of the events that led to Russia's annexation of Crimea.

The Ukrainian government accused Russia of stirring up the unrest and vowed to quell it. Russia, which has tens of thousands of troops massed along the border, warned Ukraine of more "difficulties and crises" if its leaders fail to heed Moscow's demands.

In Washington, the U.S. said any move by Russia into eastern Ukraine would be a "very serious escalation" that could bring further sanctions. White House spokesman Jay Carney said there was strong evidence that some of the pro-Russian protesters in Ukraine were paid and were not local residents.

At the same time, the U.S. announced that Secretary of State John Kerry will meet

SEE UKRAINE, A4

Your taxes will go up no matter who wins

The possibility of state taxes going up in the next couple of years is, I think, high. And that's regardless of who wins the election for governor in November.

Gov. Pat Quinn, the Democratic candidate, already has said he wants to make his "temporary" 67 percent income tax



CHUCK SWEENEY

permanent. Most of it was supposed to expire in

2015. Quinn also proposes to eliminate the 5 percent state income tax deduction for property tax payments and instead give homeowners a yearly check for \$500.

The leaders of the General Assembly, House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton, are both

on board, so this may be a done deal.

Even though Republican gubernatorial nominee Bruce Rauner says he's opposed to Quinn's tax plan, he knows that there's not enough money to avoid big cuts to education spending next year without providing more tax money. And Rauner likes

to tout his pro-education and education-reform credentials. According to the Chicago Sun-Times, "Rauner has given about \$2.5 million to (the Noble Network of Charter Schools,) which has 8,850 students, 98 percent of whom are minorities and

SEE SWEENEY, A2



\$25

rejoyce bracelet

Each bead represents something to be grateful for and rejoyce in - a special friend, a sunny day, the smile of a child, or a cherished memory of a loved one - these are the things that fill our lives with Joy and Delight.

Like all good things, the more you appreciate beauty, kindness, goodness and love, the more you find in your life to celebrate.

Crimson Ridge

GROUNDBREAKING

Belvidere church expansion begins

By Susan Vela

Rockford Register Star

BELVIDERE — Catholic dignitaries, parishioners and school children gathered at St. James Catholic Church on Monday for a groundbreaking ceremony for a new addition that could house up to 900 more people, nearly quadrupling the church's prayer space.

St. James, 535 Caswell St., is the only Catholic church in Boone County.

It can seat 325 and, because of space constraints, holds eight masses every weekend — two on Saturday and six on Sunday.

A bishop has not visited for approximately 15 years because there isn't enough room. Catholic dignitaries have said the church needs more space since the 1950s. "It's a great feeling,"



Bishop David Malloy says a prayer over the land Monday during a groundbreaking ceremony at St. James Catholic Church in Belvidere. MAX GERSH/RRSTAR.COM

the Rev. Brian Geary said before Monday's afternoon groundbreaking event. "We've been through a lot

together as a parish community. We're excited to see it now come to fruition. We've needed this for

decades. It's very gratifying to see it happen."

St. James began as a mission church in 1838.

According to church historians, the church's cornerstone was laid in 1886 and the completed church was formally dedicated in 1889.

November is targeted for completion of the new addition, Geary said. In preparation for the construction, volunteers have conducted some pew and church furniture removal.

The priest said those endeavors should save the parish a significant amount of money. So far, the parish has raised \$3 million in pledges for the project. Geary said he's planning another fundraiser for the fall to finance the difference. He's not sure what the goal will be.

The Diocese of Rockford has contributed a matching pledge of \$75,000.

Susan Vela: 815-987-1395; svela@rrstar.com; @susanvela

OBITUARIES

V

JOHN A. VENOVIC, 73

ROCKFORD — John A. Venovic, 73, went to be with the Lord on Saturday, April 5, 2014. He was born on June 26, 1940, in Chicago, the son of John and Blanche (Pokorny) Venovic. Graduated valedictorian from Union Free High School in



Wilmot, WI in 1958. John received his B.S. degree from UW Madison in 1963, and his M.S. degree from Cardinal Stritch Milwaukee in 1987. He was a lifelong learner and valued education. He served in the Navy for 28 years, completing two tours of duty in Vietnam. He retired from the Navy with the rank of commander in 1988. He married Roberta Louise Thomey Thomas of Kenosha, WI in 1967. He worked the bulk of his career at Rockford Memorial Hospital as director of facilities management until he retired in 2001. He was a long-time and active member of Emmanuel Episcopal Church. He loved fishing, gardening, and spending time with family. He also was an avid Green Bay Packer fan. He will be remembered by his big heart, generosity, and his willingness to help others. Survivors include his wife, Roberta; sister, Carol Husnick; children, Cindy (Lee) Joesten, Dale (Mendy) Thomas, Beverlee Adams and Stephen (Eiko) Venovic; 6 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren; and many cousins, nieces and nephews. Special thanks to the nursing staff, especially Holii, at Neighbors Rehabilitation in Byron for their loving care.

Memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, April 12, at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 412 N. Church Street, Rockford, IL. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in his name to Shelter Care Ministries or a charity of your choice. Farrell-Holland & Gale Funeral Home, Byron, Illinois is assisting the family. www.farrellhollandgale.com

W

KATHY L. WHITACRE, 61

BELVIDERE — Kathy L. Whitacre, 61, of Belvidere, went to the Lord on Saturday, April 5, 2014, in her home, surrounded by family



and friends, following a courageous battle with Melanoma. Born on March 24, 1953, in Belvidere, the daughter of Waldo and Margaret (Mulholland) Trueblood. She graduated from Belvidere High School, Class of 1971. Kathy married David Whitacre in Belvidere at the Calvary Baptist Church, March 11, 1972. She worked as a noon-aid at Perry Elementary School as well as a professional seamstress. Kathy attended First Presbyterian Church. She enjoyed sewing, arts and crafts, boating, rummage sales, antiquing, karaoke, attending live music events, and playing the piano. Her main passion was hosting family Christmas celebrations in her home. Kathy was a proud mother of three boys. She is survived by her husband, David; 3 sons, Corey (Micki) Whitacre, Ryan Whitacre, Brett (Kate) Whitacre; granddaughter, Cynthia Whitacre; 2 brothers, Timothy Trueblood, Michael (Shelly) Trueblood; 2 sisters, Dawn (Hermie) Legaspi; Wendy (Howard) Pearson; special sister, Clariene (Russell) Kindberg. She is preceded in death by grandparents; parents; brother, Patrick Trueblood; and special brother, Steve Jacobson. A special thank you to Heartland Hospice, her nurse, Chandra, her CNA, Misty and Chaplain, Pam.

Funeral services at 11 a.m. Friday, April 11, 2014, in First Presbyterian Church, with the Rev. Dr. Robert Kopp, officiating. Burial in Belvidere Cemetery. Visitation 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday, April 10, 2014, in Anderson Funeral and Cremation Services, Buck-Wheeler-Hyland Chapel, 218 W. Hurlbut Av. A second visitation at the church on Friday, from 10 to 10:45 a.m. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made out to the Whitacre Family. To express condolences online, please visit www.andersonfcs.com.

CITY COUNCIL

Rural on Tap bar approved amid controversy

By Kevin Haas

Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — A bar that owners say will cater to craft beer and wine drinkers was approved by aldermen Monday to open inside Rural Oaks Plaza.

Owners say they hope to open the bar by July 1.

Aldermen voted 10-4 to approve a liquor license for Rural on Tap, 1710 Rural St. The council also voted to allow the plaza to have the same number of parking spaces currently

on the lot — 54 — which is fewer than required by city code. The parking vote was 11-3.

The bar has been a divisive issue in the surrounding neighborhood. Last month, 25 people spoke at a hearing on the proposed bar. Thirteen people were opposed, and 12 were in favor.

Opponents say it will bring late-night noise, increased traffic and that parking will overflow onto neighborhood streets. They said it could

also bring other problems, such as drunken drivers or rowdy patrons.

Supporters say it will revitalize a previously vacant portion of the strip mall and add character to the neighborhood.

Ald. Tom McNamara, who represents the 3rd Ward where the bar is located, said he's had more than 50 emails and 200 phone calls from residents voicing their opinions on the proposal.

"It's one of my first issues on the council that really

divided neighborhood vs. neighborhood," McNamara said.

McNamara and Ald. Jamie Getchius, R-2, who lives a few blocks from the bar's future address but not in the ward, each urged their fellow council members to support the project.

The bar will not be allowed to have a DJ, dance floor or operate as a night club. It is also prohibited from having slot machines or video gambling.

McNamara said the

plaza's landlords, Jon and Nancy Whitlock, have attracted new businesses such as sugarjones bakery, helped others expand and removed "problem" tenants like a former tobacco shop that had led to several complaints from neighbors.

"They want to do something positive for the neighborhood, and I think they've shown that," McNamara said.

Kevin Haas: 815-987-1410; khaas@rrstar.com; @KevinMHaas

HOTEL

From Page A1

and trades workers and a downtown advocacy group — left no seat of the City Council audience unfilled.

"We are quite literally at the doorstep of transforming our entire downtown into an exciting, attractive and desirable place to live, work and play," said Gary Anderson, president of the River District Association, a downtown advocacy group.

The city's end of the redevelopment deal requires it to build new parking decks and surface parking to

support downtown visitors. It also must convert South Main Street from a one-way to a two-way between Cedar and State streets, and build a new pedestrian crossing over the Chestnut Street bridge.

Those improvements would cost about \$18.6 million. Gorman would also be rebated a portion of the hotel taxes and property taxes the company would pay after improvements are complete.

"We have a choice to either invest in ourselves or continue the downward slide of declining property values and disinvestment," Anderson told the council

before the vote.

The agreement paves the way for Gorman to purchase the city-owned building for \$250,000 and pump more than \$52 million into its redevelopment. The company still has a lot of ground to cover before construction can begin.

It will now apply for federal and state historic tax credits, complete a financial package that includes foreign investors, create detailed architectural designs and market the conference center to potential users. The aim is to complete the project before the end of 2016 in order to take advantage of

historic tax credits.

Morrissey said the vote is the culmination of years of work that includes buying the Zioc building four years ago, lobbying the state to include part of Rockford in the River Edge Redevelopment Zone and getting approval for a new hotel tax to help fund the construction of a downtown sports complex.

He said it was about two years ago that he traveled with Gorman to China to learn more about the EB-5 immigrant investor program, a key piece of the developer's plans to fund construction. EB-5 is a federal program meant to

stimulate job creation and development through foreign investment.

The city still has work to do to pave the way for the project, including finalizing its plans to redevelop the Ingersoll building into a sports complex. The complex is one of the main incentives for Gorman to build its hotel downtown.

"Both of these projects are destined for success," said Ald. Tim Durkee, R-1. "I'll bet you that in five or six years, we won't recognize what's going on downtown."

Kevin Haas: 815-987-1410; khaas@rrstar.com; @KevinMHaas

HEROIN ACROSS AMERICA

Starting over: 21-year-old recovering addict begins life anew

By Sharon Cohen

The Associated Press

AURORA, Ill. — Just out of Cook County Jail after being arrested with 15 bags of heroin, Cody Lewis had all of \$11 in his pocket. But not for long.

Almost immediately, he spent \$10 on yet another bag of smack, making the buy on the Chicago streets last May as he headed to a police station to retrieve his cellphone. He shot up in a grocery store parking lot, and continued on his way.

By then, Lewis was a \$100-a-day addict. Heroin was no longer fun. He needed it to get rid of the sweats and the shakes, the body cramps, the aches in his bones. "I had to use," he says, "to feel normal, like a regular person."

Lewis was consumed by heroin. Every day was the same: Get up sick if he hadn't used in 12 hours. Figure out how to get money. Drive 35 miles from his

suburban home in Aurora to Chicago to score. "My whole existence," he says, "was just finding ways to get high."

In many ways, Lewis represents the changing face of heroin in America. He is in his 20s, lives in the suburbs — two traits that fit a growing number of users — and graduated to heroin after years of getting high with other drugs.

When Lewis snorted his first line at age 18, he'd already used almost every imaginable drug: Marijuana. Cocaine. LSD. Ecstasy. Mushrooms. Pills. Heroin, though, was much more seductive.

"It was just like someone had wrapped me in a blanket," he recalls. "I'd found the drug I was looking for ... all the depression and anxiety and all that stuff that I was going through ... heroin kind of filled the hole. It helped me just completely forget about anything bad. ... I felt like I was king of the world."



Cody Lewis, a recovering heroin addict, runs his hands through his hair before speaking about his life and addiction Feb. 20 at the Good Samaritan Methodist Church in Addison, Ill. CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

As his habit grew, so did his need for cash.

He shoplifted video games from stores and resold them. He broke into cars, pawning anything he could steal along with his mother's jewelry and laptop. He knew he was living dangerously, but that was part of the allure.

Lewis, who is 21 but looks younger, is matter-of-fact when describing his

addiction. He's quick to offer an unvarnished account of his mistakes and the pain he has caused himself and his family.

Lewis never thought of quitting until last May when a childhood pal called, frantically seeking help. He and a girlfriend had taken heroin with a woman who'd overdosed and died. Lewis urged him

to call the cops.

After a few days, he decided to get clean.

Lewis completed rehab and started taking methadone. But after six months, he says, he realized he'd replaced one addiction with another, so he entered a detox program. He has been clean since Oct. 12.

Lewis attends Narcotics Anonymous meetings and group therapy and has begun speaking to church and school groups about his heroin use.

His mother, Karen, who attends Nar-Anon family group meetings, is proud of her son's progress but says the past few years have been an ordeal.

"I really hate to admit it, but there's been a time or two when I thought ... it would be better for all of us if he could be put out of his misery," she says. "I'm not proud of it, but I try to explain to him that until you're on the receiving end, you don't know how I feel."